

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 8, 2007

SANTA CRUZ SMALL CRAFT HARBOR WEST JETTY PATHWAY

File No. 07-072-01
Project Manager: Laura Engeman/Carol Arnold

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$250,000 to the Santa Cruz Port District to rehabilitate a pathway and construct public access amenities within the West Harbor area of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor.

LOCATION: West Jetty area, West Harbor of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor, City of Santa Cruz

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)
Exhibit 2: [Photographs of Project Area](#)
Exhibit 3: [Letters of Support](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to the Santa Cruz Port District to reconstruct West Jetty public access and construct associated access facilities, subject to the condition that no Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer has reviewed and approved in writing:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget and the names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.
2. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to carry out the project have been obtained.
3. A signing plan for the project acknowledging the Conservancy’s participation in this project and identifying the existing California Coastal Trail within the District’s jurisdiction.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code regarding public access.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development.
4. The project will serve greater than local needs.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This project will result in the replacement of a substandard pathway currently inaccessible to persons in wheelchairs, with a handicapped-accessible pathway in the West Harbor portion of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor. (Exhibit 1: Location and Site Maps). The upgrade will broaden, regrade and pave the trail and add new facilities such as benches, view areas, interpretive signs and rest areas. Once completed, the trail will be designated a spur of an existing two mile Harbor trail which is a segment of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail. When completed, the Scenic Trail will surround Monterey Bay from Santa Cruz to Pt. Pinos Lighthouse in Pacific Grove and will serve as the California Coastal Trail in this area.

The West Jetty Pathway (Pathway), as the project area is known, is visited by an estimated 150,000 people a year. Due to its steep grade in some areas, and inadequate surfacing in others, at present the Pathway is difficult even for able-bodied visitors to negotiate (Exhibit 2: Photographs) Additionally, in its current condition, the pathway lacks amenities one would expect from a popular waterfront destination, such as interpretive features, benches and overlooks.

The project will include the following elements:

1. Reconstruction of a 1,200 foot Pathway, which will be fully compliant with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and will also serve as road access for emergency and maintenance vehicles;
2. Aesthetic improvements including landscaping and attractive design features;

3. Construction of harbor overlooks, rest areas, benches, plazas and interpretive signs;
4. Lighting improvements;
5. Refuse collection and recycling upgrades.

The Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor (Harbor) was constructed in 1964 on the site of the former Woods Lagoon. Currently known as a gateway to the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary, the Harbor serves as a regional resource with recreational, commercial, social and economic benefits to both local residents and visitors from throughout the state.

The Harbor provides numerous recreational opportunities for boat owners and the public at large. Its marine park atmosphere is enhanced by informational displays along a two-mile walking tour, emphasizing the marine history of the Harbor and Monterey Bay.

The Santa Cruz Port District has long experience overseeing public construction projects, including bicycle and pedestrian Pathways, overlook areas, plazas, restrooms and other public amenities. Most recently, in 2002 the District constructed the West Jetty Walton Lighthouse which has since become a draw for both local residents and visiting tourists. The Pathway will provide enhanced access to the Lighthouse as well as the West Jetty itself, Seabright State Beach, the harbor boat channel, the marina, and Aldo's Restaurant.

The District has been very successful in raising funds for the Walton Lighthouse and other projects, and is currently engaged in active fund-raising for this project. Most of the funding would come from donations, both large and small, in part from donors desiring a memorial of a loved one on a bench, overlook, or other feature. The District has funded all preliminary engineering costs. The Conservancy would provide less than one-third of the project costs.

Site Description: The Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor is located in the northern reach of Monterey Bay within the City of Santa Cruz. It is divided into three distinct areas defined by access and use characteristics - North Harbor, West Harbor, and East Harbor. The West Jetty Pathway is located in the West Harbor area where dry boat storage, launching areas, and a turning basin are located, as well as the Walton Lighthouse and Aldo's Restaurant.

Encompassing approximately 32 acres of land and 52 acres of water, the Harbor accommodates about 920 berths and dory ties for commercial and recreational boats. Two rubble stone armored structures - the East and West Jetties - protect the navigation channel. The West Jetty, a primary feature of this project, is capped with an existing pathway that also serves as an emergency and maintenance road for the Walton Lighthouse and the jetty itself. The jetty and adjacent Pathway are known as the West Jetty Pathway.

The existing West Jetty Pathway provides pedestrian access along the channel edge to the Walton Lighthouse at the south end of the West Jetty. (Exhibit 1: Site Map). On its northern end, it terminates at the bluff adjacent to Aldo's Restaurant at the foot of Atlantic Avenue. The walk continues north along Atlantic Avenue, which then transitions to a Pathway to the lettered docks "A" to "FF". The path of travel from the lighthouse north to "A" dock is not ADA compliant and is difficult even for able-bodied individuals due to the steepness in the "A" dock area and the sand base long the jetty area.

Approximately 3.5 acres of sandy beach abut the jetties. The Harbor includes about 40,000 square feet of commercial space offering an array of restaurants and retail shops. In excess of

1,000 parking spaces support the various uses within the Harbor including access to the West Jetty Pathway.

Project History: The Santa Cruz Port District was formed in 1950 by election of the people for the purpose of developing harbor facilities in the City of Santa Cruz. A joint project was established, including the Army Corps of Engineers, the agency currently designated as the California Department of Boating and Waterways (BAW), and the Santa Cruz Port District.

The North Harbor was completed in 1964, with the West and East Harbors following in the early 1970's. The two jetties were constructed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. Various harbor facilities were developed by the District with financing provided by BAW through a twenty-year loan. Since that time, the District has completed numerous projects using a variety of funding sources, including in 2002 the Walton Lighthouse, located on the West Jetty and now a prime attraction for visitors.

The Conservancy has assisted with several projects in the Harbor. Most recently, in 2003, the Conservancy helped fund an urban waterfront project to support commercial fisherman operating out of the Harbor. Also in 2003, the Conservancy assisted with the reconstruction of the nearby O'Neil Sea Odyssey Visitor Center, an educational facility emphasizing maritime skills for at-risk youth.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$250,000
Port District	21,000
Private Donations	675,000
Total Project Cost	\$946,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this project is the fiscal year 2007-2008 appropriation from the "Safe Drinking Waters, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006" (Proposition 84). A portion of these funds were appropriated to the Conservancy for expenditure pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code for the protection of Monterey Bay and its watershed (Pub. Res. Code § 75060(e)). Priority is to be given to projects which provide matching funds from non-state funds. (Pub. Res. Code § 75071(e)).

The project would result in the protection of Monterey Bay and the adjacent watershed by encouraging non-motorized travel, providing public access to overlook areas which will promote visitor appreciation of the scenic and natural resources of the Bay, and offering interpretive features focusing on educating the public about Bay and related habitats.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is consistent with Chapter 9 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Sections 31400-31409 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access.

Section 31400 states that the Conservancy will “have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline.”

In order to carry out that mandate, the Conservancy is authorized by Section 31400.1 to provide grants, as proposed here, to public entities to develop, operate and manage lands for access to and along the coast. Consistent with the additional requirement of Section 31400.1 that access projects serve more than local public needs, the Santa Cruz Small Yacht Harbor is used by both local residents and visitors from other areas throughout the region and state.

Under Section 31400.2, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of the initial development of public accessways, provided that the Conservancy evaluates the fiscal resources of the applicant, the current funds available for coastal accessways, the urgency of the project relative to other access projects, and consistency with other Conservancy funding criteria. Staff have evaluated the project funding in light of these criteria. Without additional funding from the Conservancy, the Port District will be unable to reconstruct this trail segment.

The proposed project is also consistent with Section 31400.3, under which the Conservancy is authorized to provide funds “required to aid public agencies and nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division.” Restoration and improvement of the trail will expand public access opportunities along the Santa Cruz coastline.

Consistent with Section 31408, the Conservancy is authorized to coordinate the development of the California Coastal Trail, in consultation with the California Coastal Commission and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The West Harbor access trail is to be designated a spur of the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary Scenic Trail, which also serves as a segment of the California Coastal Trail in Santa Cruz County.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective B** of the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan, the project will result in the placement of Coastal Trail signs along 1,200 linear feet of the Pathway (see Goal 1, Objective D below).

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective D**, the proposed project would result in the upgrade of over 1,200 linear feet of trail and will become a spur of the Harbor Trail which serves as a segment of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail, the Coastal Trail for this region.

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective A**, the proposed project would improve a waterfront park, the Harbor itself, by upgrading existing facilities, including improvements designed to ensure that the West Jetty Trail is wheelchair accessible.

The proposed project is also consistent with **Goal 2, Objective E** in that it will upgrade dilapidated facilities, which will result in an increase in coastal recreational opportunities for residents of and visitors to the Santa Cruz area.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted September 20, 2007, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** This project is supported by Senator Joe Simitian, Assemblyman John Laird, Congressman Sam Farr, the City of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County Supervisors Neil Coonerty and Jan Beautz and others (Exhibit 3: Letters of Support).
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located at the West Harbor of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor within the coastal zone of the City of Santa Cruz (Exhibit 1: Location and Site Maps).
5. **Need:** The District will assume management responsibilities for the West Jetty Pathway and support amenities, but is in need of funding to assist with some of the construction costs.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Harbor is enjoyed by boaters, fishermen, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other members of the local community, as well as visitors from other areas of the state. The West Jetty Trail will be a spur of a two mile Harbor trail which is a segment of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail, part of the Coastal Trail for this area which attracts visitor from all over the state and nation.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** The District is responsible for assuring that all accessways within its jurisdiction are up to current safety standards. In its present conditions, the Pathway is unsafe due to its steep slope in some areas and the Jetty's inadequate surface of sand and disconnected concrete slab. Additionally, it does not provide for visitation by the disabled community. All of these conditions make it imperative that the Pathway be upgraded.
8. **Leverage:** The District has shown great success in raising funds for various access projects within its jurisdiction and is confident it will be able to do so for this current project as witnessed by the private donations already made toward this project. The Conservancy's portion is less than one-third of the project's costs.
10. **Readiness:** The District is ready to move forward with this project once funding is secured.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** The project will continue the historic role of the Conservancy in helping to provide whole access in the coastal areas of the City of Santa Cruz, as well as with other Harbor projects including commercial fishing support and restoration of the O'Neil Sea Odyssey Visitor Center.
13. **Cooperation:** The project is the result of close cooperation between the District, the City, and the Conservancy.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

As a condition of approval, the project will be designed and constructed to be consistent with the Coastal Conservancy's Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development. In particular,

Standard No. 1. Protect the Public and Coastal Resources: The project will be designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms, will be subordinate to the setting's character and will prevent unwarranted hazards to the land and public safety.

Standard No. 2. Correct Hazards: The project will be designed and constructed to eliminate unsafe conditions such as an overly steep slope and a soft sand and disconnected concrete slab surfacing, making wheelchair access currently impossible.

Standard No. 3. Access Construction and Location: The reconstructed trail will be fully wheelchair accessible.

Standard No. 8. Trails: Once upgraded, the West Jetty Pathway will be designated a spur of the two mile trail around the Harbor, which is a segment of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail, part of the California Coastal Trail in this region.

Standard No. 9. Scenic Overlook: As reconstructed, the West Jetty Pathway would provide for unique views of Monterey Bay and the Pacific Ocean, to be enjoyed on the trail, from overlooks and while resting on benches.

Standard No. 12. Support Facilities: The proposed project would include interpretive signs, benches, overlooks, and trash receptacles.

Standard No. 13: Barrier-Free Access. The proposed project will be wheelchair accessible along its length.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The certified Santa Cruz County Local Coastal Program (LCP) contains several general policies that support the proposed project, including that the public's right to access to and along the shoreline shall be protected.

The LCP incorporates the Santa Cruz Harbor Development Plan (Harbor Plan) as a specific plan. Under Section A, the Harbor Plan lists primary objectives, several of which are supported by this project. These are: [fourth objective] the provision of "non-boating recreational opportunities and shoreline access for the general public," and, [seventh objective] the provision of "visitor-serving facilities for the citizens of the local community as well as for tourists visiting the area."

Additionally, the Harbor Plan's Access and Circulation section states that "a pedestrian walkway will border the interior shorelines of the Harbor, linking the various uses of the Harbor including public observation decks...." This project provides interior shoreline access and public observation areas. This section also states that "when any upgrade or new construction take place, access improvements for physically disabled persons also will take place." The West Jetty Pathway would be fully accessible to visitors in wheelchairs.

This project is consistent with other Harbor Plan policies as well, including Section 2.1 requiring that “scenic and visual qualities of [the Harbor and] public views to and along the water...are protected;” Section 5.1 requiring continued “non-boater recreational opportunities (pathways, mini-parks, benches, observation decks) throughout Santa Cruz Harbor...;” Section 5.2 requiring improvement of “pedestrian access to and along the interior Harbor...;” and, Section 5.3 requiring improvement of access to “harbor facilities for physically disabled persons as part of any upgrade or new construction project;” and Section 5.5 requiring improvement of “access to and along the West Jetty.” This project would protect public views to and along the water and would provide non-boater recreational opportunities, pedestrian access to and along the interior Harbor, and access for physically disabled persons.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: Staff have determined that the proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15301 in that it involves the operation, repair and minor alteration of an existing public trail - the Santa Cruz Small Yacht Harbor West Jetty Pathway - with minor expansion of the existing trail to accommodate benches, rest areas and view areas. (See 14 Cal Code of Regulations Section 15301 (c)). On July 30, 2007, the District filed a Notice of Exemption, the review period of which ended on August 29, 2007. No comments were received. Upon approval by the Conservancy, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.